

Orono Bog Boardwalk Annual Report 2008

On November 30, 2008 the Orono Bog Boardwalk closed the gate on another successful season of serving as the premier nature destination for those living in the Greater Bangor Area. Although we do not yet have the total number of visits to the Boardwalk this year, we feel confident it was over 30,000. In the sections below we provide detailed information about publicity and events attended, docents and student intern, guided group walks, nature walks, and maintenance. We feel fortunate to have a core group of volunteers that have stayed active over the years. However, we realize that as with any volunteer-run organization, it is important to increase our volunteer base. That will be our focus in the coming year.

As Director I would like to thank the many individuals that have volunteered their time this past year. I would like to thank the group leaders and Management Team for all of their hard work over this past year: Jean Berry and Paul Markson (scheduling and docents); Phil Locke (maintenance coordinator); John Maddaus and Wendall Tremblay (guided tours); Jerry Longcore (Orono Land Trust representative to the Management Team, fund raising); John Daigle (University of Maine representative to the Management Team, student intern); Tracy Willette (City of Bangor representative to the Management Team); and Joan Martin (volunteer coordinator). I would like to thank all of the docents and guides who have contributed greatly to the operation and mission of the Boardwalk. A complete list of these dedicated volunteers can be found in Appendix 2 at the end of the report.

Jim Bird
Orono Bog Boardwalk Director

Publicity and Events Sponsored or Attended: The Boardwalk received some good publicity this year. The National Park Service's National Natural Landmarks Program featured the Boardwalk in its annual detailed color brochure about the Program. This brochure goes to all National Park Services offices as well as all those interested in this program.

The Boardwalk Director attended a special celebration at the Curran Homestead in Orrington, ME to honor Bangor Daily News Columnist Joni Averill for all of her public service work she accomplishes through her daily newspaper column. The Boardwalk was one of seven organizations that spoke at the celebration and presented Ms. Averill with an Orono Bog Boardwalk T-shirt.

In the fall, volunteers from the Boardwalk attended the Alpha One Adaptive Fair in Bangor, ME. Alpha One is a company that provides assistance to people with disabilities. We attend this Fair to promote the Boardwalk's wheelchair accessibility.

As in previous years, volunteers from the Boardwalk staffed an information table at the Bangor Garden Show. This event draws thousands of area residents each year and our volunteers talked with hundreds of people that stopped by our table to find out about the Boardwalk. We also attended the Orono Festival Days, an annual event held on Mill Street in Orono. Again, scores of people were introduced to the Boardwalk.

Every year Orono High School holds a service-learning fair for students to become acquainted with area opportunities for their required service-learning project during their junior year. This year a number of students picked up information about the Boardwalk and volunteers explained volunteering opportunities available to them.

For the second year Boardwalk volunteers attended the University of Maine Volunteer Opportunity Fair. At our information table, students learned of the many volunteer opportunities available at the Boardwalk.

Early in the year, the editor of Up North Magazine (Greenville, ME) contacted the Director about writing a feature story about the Boardwalk. Arrangements were made for the editor to receive Boardwalk photographs and information. The article was nicely done and provided those living "up north" with a positive view of the Boardwalk.

Boardwalk volunteers held their 5th annual Orono Bog Boardwalk Yard Sale in June. This yearly events typically attracts hundreds of "yard salers" to look for bargains. This year we had over 40 families donate items to the sale and our first customer arrived at 5:30am! Twelve volunteers helped set up and staff the yard sale throughout the day and the result was over \$3000 for our Boardwalk endowment fund. This yard sale is just another way that volunteers inform the public about our Boardwalk.

The Orono Bog Boardwalk website (www.oronobogwalk.com) was moved to a new host this year: Rainstorm Consulting in Orono. This has allowed us to have more control of our site as we can now make updates quickly. We thank Ginny Whittaker for her fine service as volunteer web-master over the years.

We realize that the Boardwalk and its events (see below) have to be better publicized to attract visiting groups to the Boardwalk. In the coming year we will be working on ways to increase the Boardwalk's visibility.

Fund-raising: The Operating Budget is based on the University of Maine's 2008 fiscal year, which extended from July 1, 2007 thru June 30, 2008. During this period income was \$11,443.58 and expenses were \$5,023.39. More than half of this income (\$6,730.84)

was payover of earnings from the Endowment Fund. Gifts and donations, including “money pipe” donations” equaled \$2,357.90 and the sale of T-shirts and other products equaled \$2,419.50. Temporary investment income on the Operating Account equaled \$86.83. The largest expenses were purchase of T-shirts (\$1,794.50), maintenance supplies and materials (\$1,458.53), telephone and website (\$607.24), and printing and copying (\$437.22).

Endowment Fund income was \$8,519.90 with identified donor gifts of \$4,705.00 and other income from various sources equaling \$3,814.90. Most of this amount was from the annual yard sale (\$3,033.50). Endowment Fund income in 2008 was nearly \$4,000 below that of 2007. Part of this decrease was that no fall Potluck/Contra-dance/Auction event was held. Also, no funds were obtained from the grant proposals submitted to the Quimby Family Foundation and the Newman Foundation.

Docents and Student Intern: In 2008, the Orono Bog Boardwalk gained four new volunteer docents, and lost two. One group-training session for all docents was provided in May. Also, individual sessions for new docents were provided on an as-needed basis. The OBB has consistently maintained approximately 3-dozen docents over the past several seasons. Unfortunately, this season saw a marked decrease in docents actually willing to volunteer their time, making that 3-dozen a much smaller number in real life. Many docent shifts went unfilled this season. Docents are the people who daily open and close the boardwalk gate, greet visitors, inform users of boardwalk rules, maintain the appearance of the cabin and boardwalk, answer visitor’s questions about bog natural history, sell boardwalk t-shirts and other items, provide local area information and insight, and generally oversee the day-to-day workings of the boardwalk. They are typically asked to volunteer 1 or 2, 3-hour shifts per month in peak season, less so in the fall. Without these volunteers a visit to the OBB would be a much less satisfying experience. Two of these docents act as group leaders. One maintains the weekly schedule for docent shifts, while the other oversees the daily operation of the boardwalk. Both of these leaders also provide training to new docent volunteers. Additionally, a seasonal Student Intern, who is paid, provides critical assistance when needed most, and he / she receives on-the-job experience, which is usually related to their chosen field of study, often that of park management and outdoor recreation.

Guided Group Walks: Ten volunteer tour guides provided guided walks for 35 groups this year. Twenty-one of these groups were school groups, 17 of them from public schools, three from private schools, and one a home-schooling coop. The students ranged in age from Kindergarten to a high school Advanced Placement (AP) Biology class. A total of 1,031 children and 123 adults (teachers and parent chaperones) participated in these school tours, with May and October the busiest months. In addition to several school groups from the greater Bangor area, school groups came from Milo, Dover-Foxcroft, Corinth, Etna-Dixmont, Searsport, Surry, Orland, and Deer Isle. Three non-school youth groups came for tours, including two Cub Scout dens and a group from the

University of Maine Upward Bound program. Eleven adult groups also visited the boardwalk. These included five college classes, three from the University of Maine and two from University College of Bangor, as well as three senior's groups, and groups from the Bangor Regional Leadership Institute, the Maine Vocational Rehabilitation Association, and the County Registers of Deeds Association. In all, 17 tours took place in May and early June, four tours were during July and August, and 14 tours took place between early September and early November.

In September a mailing was sent to about 80, K-12 principals at schools in Penobscot County, seeking to increase awareness of the services the boardwalk offers to school groups. Detailed instructions were given regarding the information needed to set up a school tour. We not only want to establish dates, times and numbers of students, but also find out what instruction teachers are providing in their classrooms related to bog ecology, so that we could make connections to prior instruction. Despite this letter, the number of school groups declined slightly, from twelve in the spring to nine in the fall.

As a consequence of the downturn in the U.S. economy, some school systems have announced that they are curtailing field trips for the coming year. Thus, there may be fewer requests for school tours of the Orono Bog Boardwalk in the near future. We need to consider other ways of sharing the unique environment of the Orono Bog with school classes. This might include enhancing the information available through the web site (video clips illustrating and describing various species? sets of photos showing selected species at different times of the year? increased information about bog origins, hydrology, and other physical features?) Another possibility is to offer presenters and illustrated presentations at schools. We could also do more to publicize the boardwalk for non-school youth and adult groups. See Appendix 1 for a complete list of guided walks.

Nature Walks: Typically, the management committee of the Boardwalk arranges for a variety of "by reservation-only" nature walks led by experts in particular areas. In March or early April, potential leaders are contacted to see if they would like to lead a nature walk on their area of interest. This year we were fortunate to have the following walks:

Short distance migrant birds of the Orono Bog led by Jerry Longcore, United States Fish and Wildlife Biologist, retired and Bill Glanz, Associate Professor of Zoology, University of Maine. (11 attending)

Hydrology in bogs and fens – where does the water go? Led by Andy Reeve, Associate Professor, University of Maine. (3 attending)

Mosses, peat mosses, and other tiny plants of bogs led by Dennis Anderson, Associate Scientist, School of Biology & Ecology, University of Maine. (4 attending)

Peat bogs for kids led by our Boardwalk intern Chelsey MacRae, Undergraduate student, Department of Parks and Recreation, University of Maine. (15 attending)

How some plants survive where most plants would perish led by Christa Schwintzer, Professor of Botany, University of Maine. (6 attending)

Deep peat nature walk led by Ron Davis, Professor Emeritus of Biology and Quaternary Studies, University of Maine. (4 attending)

Night sky walk led by Neil Comins, Professor of Physics, University of Maine.
Note: this walk was cancelled due to weather.

This year we had 43 people participate in these “reservation-only” walks.

Drop-In Walking Tours: This year for the first time we offered scheduled general tours of the Boardwalk on the 2nd and 3rd Saturdays of the month. This was started because a number of visitors asked if a tour of the Boardwalk was available. Leaders of the guided group walks volunteered to give these drop-in walks. Although fewer than 15 people (in total) attended these walks, we hope that as the years go by and the tours are better publicized that more people will start attending.

Maintenance, Construction, Replacements: As in other years, much work was needed to get the boardwalk ready for opening on May 1, 2008. Work started in the first part of April with the maintenance team lead by Phil Locke and Jim Bird (coordinators).

Activities included sweeping the entire boardwalk, removing vegetation from crevices, removing the interpretative station covers and the kiosk sign cover and cleaning the signs, putting up boardwalk signs at the start of the boardwalk and at the Bangor City Forest parking lot, checking the entire boardwalk for broken deck boards and railings, checking to see that all nails were flush with the boards, positioning the water gauge at station 6, checking the level of the boardwalk, and checking maintenance supplies and purchasing what was necessary. The leveling of the entire boardwalk was completed by the end of June. This is typically our most time-consuming activity as we have to check level on each of the 509 sections, making sure that the boardwalk conforms to ADA requirements.

Throughout the 2008 season maintenance activities also included on an ongoing basis: trimming overhanging vegetation and making sure that the trees along the boardwalk were stable, trimming vegetation along the boardwalk so that water is not wicked up to the boardwalk sections, which would hasten their deterioration, checking the status of each of the 509 section numbers and replacing as necessary, replacing damaged deck boards and railings, and checking level on many sections and re-leveling when necessary. An important activity that was completed during 2008 was to make and attach iron strips at several junctions (19-20-21-22, 312-313, 329-330, 338-339, and 374-375) to prevent

lateral shifting out of alignment. We may need to connect several more problematic junctions in this manner next season. We bought some extra-wide (6 inch) deck boards for bridging gaps between sections -- these seem to work fairly well. Many deck boards (and some railings) had to be replaced this season. The decay rate, especially for sections in the shadier areas, seems to have accelerated, which is worrisome. The "NORTH" sign for station 6 and will install it next spring. Phil Locke also has the red railing paint in his basement. Anyone else storing boardwalk supplies over the winter should not forget to return them next May! Due to heavy use, the outhouse may need to be pumped out next spring.

Appendix 1: Guided walks information

Date	Group	Number Attending	Grade/Age
May 4	Bangor Leadership	?	Adult
May 8	Orland School	15+1	Grade 7
May 9	ME Vocation Rehab Assoc	9+4	Age 20-25
May 12	Surry Elementary School	20+4	Grade 3-4
May 14	Deer Isle Ston School	20+4	Grade K
May 15	Stillwater Montessori Env. Club	60+	PreK-7
May 19	Waldo Cty YMCA	20+2	Senior Citizens
May 19	MSDA 3	43+8	Grade 3-4
May 20	Hammond St Senior Center	14	Senior Citizens
May 21	Central HS AP Biology	11+2	Grade 10-11
May 23	Bangor Christian School	28+6	Grade 7
May 24	Eagle Ridge Housing Brewer	?	Senior Citizens
May 30	McGraw Elementary	40+5	Grade 2
May 30	McGraw Elementary	40+5	Grade 2

June 3	Milo Ele. School Civil Rights Team	40+8	Grade 5-6
June 11	Morrison Elementary	60+12	Grade 3
June 5	Bangor HS Science	75+3	Grade 9
June 9	Etna-Dixmont School-Science	35+8	Grade 8
July 12	UMaine Upward Bound	7	Grade 11
July 29	UMaine Intensive Eng. Inst.	5+1	Adult
August 15	Regis. Deeds Assoc.	12	Adult
August 23	Cub Scout Pack 63 Newport	20+12	Ages 7-11
September 11	ME Highlands Christian Home Sch	10+5	Ages 3-9
September 22	Orono Middle Sch Science	49+8	Grade 7
September 29&30	Univ College Bangor	? – self guided	College classes
September 24	UMaine Biology	20+2	BIO 205 class
September 25	UMaine Biology	20+2	BIO 205 class
October 3	Viola Rand Ele Sch Bradley	17+4	Grade 2
October 15	Cub Scouts	8+5	Ages 7-11
October 16	Veazie Comm Sch	18+4	Grade 4
October 17	Searsport HS	56+8	Grades 9-12?

October 30	Deer Isle Ston School	29+6	Grade K-3
October 31	Fruit Street School Bangor	Grade K-3	
November 5	Old Town Elem	31+6	Grade 2
November 7	All Saints Cath. School Bangor	14+4	Grade 7

Appendix 2: Docents and guides

Dick Andren	Nancy Andrews	Hope Brogunier	Kathy Burns
Kay Carter	Daryle Carter	Carol Clift	Lee Davis
Ron Davis	Debbie Dettor	Christina Diebold	Donna Dwyer
Shirley Ellis	Maxine Ewankow	Barb Guidotti	Linda Ives
Fred Kircheis	Nancy Larson	Jerry Ledwith	Al Larson
Phil Locke	Jerry Longcore	Paul Markson	Joan Martin
Pam Nelon	Libby Norton	Dana Peterson	John Pickering
Justin Poland	Andy Reeve	Judy Scholten	Adam Sitarski
Wendall Tremblay	Jamie Wren	Rae Wren	John Maddaus
Jean Barry	Bill Glanz	Christa Schwintzer	Dennis Anderson
Chelsey MacRae	Neil Comins		